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ABSTRACT

Although the notion of teaching literature in an intensive weekend format may present numerous problems to be solved by the instructor, it can be a format that results in considerable success. It is conducive to the schedules of many students who work during the week, and weekend literature courses have proven to be popular. Intensive weekend courses in literature are best taught at upper division levels, since students are more familiar with terms and forms, and may be somewhat more mature. Greater independent work is required of the students in intensive studies. Whatever the level, three key elements to any successful intensive weekend course are: (1) careful organization by the instructor; (2) varied kinds of approaches and teaching techniques; and (3) unique outcomes perceived by the students. A detailed syllabus should be prepared and distributed to all students well before the semester begins. Research papers may or may not be required, but class activities should include written assignments, group work, quizzes, and group projects. Being together with a class for lengthy sessions, perhaps 8 hours or more on a Saturday, presents special problems and requires ingenuity on the part of the teacher. Such courses are not for everyone, but when the student turns the semester into a satisfactory routine of study, the format provides needed flexibility and often unique outcomes and learning experiences. (A detailed syllabus of one literature course taught in the weekend format, "Utopias and Dystopias," is appended.) (HB)

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Teaching Literature in the Intensive Weekend Format

In the early 1980s when a new dean of our college suggested that the faculty of City College consider offering courses in an intensive weekend format, my reaction was quite negative. How could the schedule he suggested be viable? True, the actual classroom hours of a literature course could be divided into three segments in a semester, with classes meeting all day Saturday and half a day on Sundays for three weekends, fulfilling the basic requirements of credit hours. But, obviously, that was just the beginning of questions to be answered. Questions such as: How could students gain as much in such compressed periods as they would in shorter classes held more frequently? How could they be expected to prepare one-third of their course work at a time without the usual response and direction from the instructor? How would such a schedule affect the writing of research papers or position papers? Would there be a drop not only in numbers of papers but also in quality? And, how would this intensive weekend format be structured so that students and teacher could survive the very long hours without exhaustion or boredom? The final, and very important, question was, how many students would choose what appeared at the outset to be a punishing regimen instead of the traditional evening classes on one or two nights a week?

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Those of us who doubted the wisdom of this pedagogical approach were assured that such classes had been offered in a number of institutions of higher learning for some time with considerable success. The most significant selling point to me was the suggestion that many of our students, almost all of whom are regularly employed at full-time jobs, would find it easier to schedule these classes than they found the regular week night offerings. The college had had some success already with Friday night or Saturday morning classes offered once a week, surprising as that was to some of us. Many of our students are nurses, police officers, workers offshore in the oil industry or sales representatives who travel much of the week. These students, it was felt, could not only build weekend classes into their work schedules but could use blocks of time during the week for study. No one insisted that faculty try this new approach, but several of us agreed to see what might be possible in our disciplines.

From the beginning, I felt that the composition courses would best be left on the once or twice weekly schedule. The same was felt by computer science, mathematics and foreign language professors concerning the rudimentary courses in those areas. With these exceptions, then, courses were gradually introduced in the intensive weekend format in literature, history, philosophy, sociology, art history, psychology, political science, nursing, music appreciation and religious studies. Some of these courses were not successful, either in the view of the instructor or the students. However, many intensive weekend courses have proved to

be very popular and have become a standard part of our course offerings. Initially classes were scheduled for Saturdays and Sundays, but most now meet on Fridays and Saturdays.

Regardless of having heard about the weekend format being used in other colleges and universities, neither I nor my colleagues wrote to these places to learn how <u>they</u> did it. Perhaps we could have saved ourselves time and trouble by doing so, and that is why today I am offering suggestions borne of experience on how you might initiate such courses at your own institution, if you are interested. From 1983 to the present, I taught nine different literature courses in the intensive weekend format, repeating several. The nine courses are: Shakespeare: the History Plays, The History of the English Novel, America in Fiction and Film (to the 20th century), Contemporary British Fiction, World Theatre, American Women Playwrights and Introduction to Literary Forms.

The last named above, Introduction to Literary Forms, is one causing me to have some reservations. All of the other courses listed are upper division courses, calling for completion of an introductory course in literature as a pre-requisite. Although the particular group of students in this introductory class taught on weekends did work comparable to other classes meeting once a week, I feel that this structure is <u>not</u> ideal for beginners who are working toward the acquisition of critical terminology and literary analysis skills. I used a <u>four</u> weekend schedule of somewhat shorter hours to help solve problems I foresaw in this course.

As I stated many of the students did well, but I would have been more content if we had met more often. Thus my preference would be not to offer this course on a weekend basis unless the number of meetings were increased.

At City College we have a mix of evening and weekend classes taught primarily by full-time faculty available during the week for advising conferences. Support Services (library, writing lab, counseling services) as well as administrative personnel are available to weekend students. Greater independent work is required of students, but they are not left entirely on their own. Within this setting, whatever the level, key elements to a successful intensive weekend course are:

a. careful organization by the teacher
b. varied kinds of approaches/teaching techniques
c. unique outcomes perceived by the students

Even more than usual, careful advance planning and preparation are necessary. The list of required textbooks should be available at the time the course is announced (for us, during early registration for the upcoming semester). A syllabus with specific due dates for reading assignments should be made available by the end of the semester before the course begins. The schedule for any literature course should allow enough time for a considerable amount of reading prior to the first meeting of the class (ideally at least one month after the semester begins, the first weekend class meets). The classes then are held with one month intervals between the first and the second weekends, and between the second

and the third. Some latecomers, signing up at regular registration, ave done well in these courses, but students generally seem to appreciate the opportunity to start their reading early whenever possible.

The syllabus for most of my classes includes suggestions for study approaches, questions to consider and the advice to keep a notebook (not for me to check, but for the student to record information, impressions and analyses of literature for future reference). Some of the information, that might ordinarily be delivered in an introductory lecture, is often included in the syllabus, allowing the class to discuss issues raised there when the first class convenes. The syllabus is mailed out to students if they have not picked it up immediately after regular registration. They are advised to pick up the special bibliography prepared for the course and available in the main library. These are the materials they will then use, along with their textbooks, before we ever meet as a class.

Students may or may not be expected to prepare research papers, at the discretion of the professor. Often I have chosen other types of reports, group projects or position papers rather than the formal research paper and have found the results beneficial overall. Writing assignments (essays or briefer exercises such as thumbnail sketches of characters or paragraphs on setting, theme, or style), as well as quizzes, are part of the classroom activities. In addition to these student activities and open dialogue, small group discussions and reports allow individual initiative and group cooperation in working out answers to

questions raised. Occasionally, students do not wish to participate in oral readings of plays, poems or passages in stories, but most respond well to such involvement. Guest lecturers, audiotapes and films help provide variety and additional scope.

Adapting our teaching methods to fit this format has meant that many of us have gone far beyond the usual formula of lecture, film, discussion and writing exercise. Being together as a learning group from six to ten o'clock Friday evenings and from nine in the morning until five in the afternoon on Saturdays, brings unexpected rewards similar to those found in very good graduate seminars or excellent professional workshops. Traditional course objectives are not lost sight of; in fact, even more serious attention perhaps is given to the preparation of the course syllabus and other print materials. Our students make use of and appear to appreciate bibliographies, charts of dates, maps and supplementary materials distributed to them, and seem to synthesize such elements into a meaningful whole. An extra boon, the lagniappe, as we say in Louisiana, is to be found in the classroom dynamics. Students in these classes often work together and form friendships analogous to those of traditional undergraduates, making college a more satisfying, shared experience than is sometimes true for adults working towards a degree.

Such courses are not for everyone, of course. But for those who have turned an experiment into a satisfactory routine, the courses offered in this format provide needed flexibility in scheduling without the loss of academic rigor. For our adult

students, taking responsibility for their own learning is not unwelcome or threatening. The attraction often is to those who are adept at managing their time, who prefer to see the semester laid out in three sets of assigned tasks allowing them to budget that time, and finally, knowing full well what is expected, come to class prepared. We offer literature courses in other formats, but the Intensive Weekend Courses can and do provide unique outcomes for both students and teachers.

Lit. 484:81 Utopias and Dystopias — Dorothy H. Brown

Loyola City College — An Intensive Weekend Class — 3 credit hours
Fall 1992 — September 25-26; October 23-24; November 20-21
Fridays 6 to 10 p. m.; Saturdays 9 to 5 p. m.

Texts: All of the following are paperback editions.

Utopia by Thomas More.

Looking Backward by Edward Bellamy.

The Time Machine by H. G. Wells.

Brave New World by Aldous Huxley.

1984 by George Orwell.

Player Piano by Kurt Vonnegut.

Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury.

Purpose: Imaginative views of society which serve either as models or as warnings have been produced by writers of futuristic fiction. Whether the view be of an idealized state such as in Thomas More's Utopia or the reverse, the nightmarish totalitarianism of George Orwell's 1984, the authors suggest replacement of the old world with a new form. Posing serious questions on many issues, this sort of fiction is both provocative and entertaining. This course will include both fiction and essays pertaining to the short stories and novels of this genre.

Method: Lecture and dialogue will alternate, but in general the class will discuss informally the works assigned. In addition each student will give a report on an assigned topic. Films will include The Time Machine, 1984, and Fahrenheit 451.

Papers, Tests and Grades: No research paper will be required, but regular writing exercises will be a part of Lit. 489. These essays, the oral report, quizzes and the final exam will be the main basis for the class grade. Participation in class discussion also will be considered.

Attendance: Intensive Weekend Courses are successful only if students devote adequate advance preparation time to the readings, as well as making sure that the scheduled days are free from other responsibilities. The schedule may be altered somewhat, but is likely to follow the outline given. Works listed for a given weekend are due on that weekend. Only in the most unusual circumstances can any sort of makeup work be considered.

Supplementary Materials: A number of handouts will be provided by the instructor. Students are encouraged to also be alert to magazine or newspaper articles or other materials which might be shared with the class.

Office Hours: Stallings 116. Telephone ex. 2156 or leave a message at ex. 3530. Feel free to arrange a conference.

Lit. 484:81 Utopias and Dystopias Dorothy H.Brown

Reading Assignments:

Weekend I	Thomas More's Utopia (1516).
	Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward (1888).
	H. G. Wells' The Time Machine (1895).
Weekend II	Aldous Huxley's Brave New World (1932).
	George Orwell's 1984 (1949).
Weekend III	Kurt Vonnegut's Player Piano (1952).
	Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451 (1953).

How to Prepare:

Consider what you know already of ideal societies and/or what you know of the benefits or detriments of the uses of science in the lives of human beings. What do you already know of what philosophers and great writers have said about the relationship of the individual to society? Aldous Huxley wrote, "There is no credit in not knowing what can be known. Some literary men . . . positively pride themselves on their ignorance of science; they are fools and arrogant at that. . . . Chaucer would have regarded such persons with pity and contempt." (Along the Road). Walker Percy wrote, "If the first great intellectual discovery of my life was the beauty of the scientific method, surely the second was the discovery of the singular predicament of man in the very world which has been transformed by this science." And, Percy also has said, "The joys of science and the joys of life as a human are not necessarily convergent." And in regard to the political, economic and social structure of states, what have you learned of successes and failures?

Some of the thematic topics in the works to be read include:

propaganda, subconscious persuasion
conditioning, psychological manipulation
drugs, chemicals
the power of the word
mechanization, technology
dehumanization, loss of identity
over-organization
lack of spirituality

In reading, try to follow these suggestions:

1. Read the Introduction or Afterword or any notes on the author in the book.

2. Read the novel for enjoyment. All the novels have been chosen because they do fit the utopian/dystopian theme, but all are interesting works in other ways also.

3. Make notes on each work before moving on to the next. Write a brief analysis, listing the following:
   a. Setting (time and place)
   b. Characters (main and subordinate)

3. (continued)
   c. Point of View (through whose eyes do we see the tale?)
   d. Plot (what is the basic conflict? what action takes place?)
   e. Theme (what is the major idea of the story?)
   f. Dominant Impression (didactic, emotional, place, characters?)
   g. Language and Style (any significant use of figurative language or stylistic devices?)

These notes can be very abbreviated, but should follow a consistent form on notecards or in a notebook. They are meant to help you recall the novel when the work is discussed in class.

4. Look up any unfamiliar words. A standard College Dictionary should supply most of this information. If not, consult the Oxford English Dictionary in the library.

5. We are not dealing with a large number of works; therefore, you should find time to take careful note of significant details as well as the overall meaning of the story.

Final Note: A detailed hourly schedule will be provided in class. See you then!

D. H. Brown

Dorothy H. Brown

Additional Utopian and Dystopian Works

1901 Butler, Samuel. Erewhon.
1904 Chesterton, G. K. The Napoleon of Noting Hill.
1904 Rolfe, Fr. ("Baron Corvo"). Hadrian the Seventh.
1906 Anonymous. Star of the Morning. Equality for women.
1906 Wells, H. G. In the Days of the Comet.
1907 Wilson, Jesse. When the Women Reign 1930. Anti-feminist.
1909 Kipling, Rudyard. "With the Night Mail, a Story of 2000 A.D."
1910 Wells, H. G. When the Sleeper Awakes.
1911 Minnett, Cora. The Day After To-Morrow.
1912 Hodgson, William H. The Night Land.
1926 Haldane, Charlotte. Man's World.
1926 Ridley, F. H. The Green Machine.
1928 Forster, E. M. "The Machine Stops."
1930 Tillyard, Aelfrida. Concrete, a Story of Two Hundred Years Hence.
1932 Huxley, Aldous. Brave New World.
1938 Lewis, C. S. Out of the Silent Planet.
1945 Orwell, George. Animal Farm.
1948 Skinner, B. F. Walden Two.
1949 Orwell, George. 1984.
1952 Vonnegut, Kurt. Player Piano.
1953 Clarke, Arthur. Childhood's End.
1953 Waugh, Evelyn. Love Among the Ruins.
1953 Bradbury, Ray. Fahrenheit 451.
1955 Golding, William. The Inheritors.
1960 Hartley, L. P. Facial Justice.
1961 Heinlein, Robert. Stranger in a Strange Land.
1962 Huxley, Aldous. Island.
1968 Frayn, Michael. A Very Private Life.
1968 Clarke, Arthur. 2001.
1969 Hale, John. The Paradise Man.
1971 Percy, Walker. Love in the Ruins.
1971 Sillitoe, Alan. Travels in Nihilon.
1978 Burgess, Anthony. 1985.
1980 Tevis, Walter. Mockingbird.
1982 Clarke, Arthur. 2010: Odyssey Two.

This is, of course, a partial listing of interesting works on the theme of utopian or dystopian societies. The focus attempted here is on community or society as a planned entity, not simply on fantastic tales of monsters or dreams. This is a supplement to the library bibliographies on the topic: Utopias and Dystopias and Future Studies.

Please stop by the Loyola Library to pick up copies of these bibliographies. The library will no longer supply instructors with enough copies for a whole class, but the individual should be able to request a copy, especially of Utopias and Dystopias.

Lit. 484:81 Utopias and Dystopias Dorothy H. Brown

Loyola City College An Intensive Weekend Class 3 credit hours

Weekend I

Friday	6:00 p. m.	Intro. to course. Background on the idea of ideal societies. Definitions. Goals.
	7:00 p. m.	General discussion.
	7:10 p. m.	Buzz groups (for twenty minutes).
	7:30 p. m.	Reports from groups.
	7:45 p. m.	Break.
	8:00 p. m.	Audio-tape on Thomas More;s Utopia.
	8:35 p. m.	Discussion on Utopia.
	9:00 p. m.	Essay on More's Utopia.
	10:00 p. m.	End of session.
Saturday	9:00 a. m.	Quiz on More's Utopia.
	10:00 a. m.	Introduction to modern utopian writers. Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward.
	10:30 a. m.	Break.
	10:45 a. m.	Discussion.
	11:15 a. m.	Short writing exercise on Looking Backward.
	Noon	Lunch break.
	1:00 p. m.	Discussion of H. G. Wells' The Time Machine.
	2:00 p. m.	Ideas for projects or papers.
	2:15 p. m.	Videotape of The Time Machine.
	4:00 p. m.	Discussion. Assignments for Weekend II.
	5:00 p. m.	End of session.

Weekend II

Friday	6:00 p. m.	Discussion on utopian and dystopian literary works in general. Considering real experiments in utopian societies.
	6:30 p. m.	Aldous Huxley's Brave New World. Discussion.
	7:30 p. m.	Break.
	7:45 p. m.	Reports on current issues related to topics in Huxley's novel.
	9:15 p. m.	Short quiz.
	10:00 p. m.	End of session.
Saturday	9:00 a. m.	Videotape of George Orwell's Animal Farm (or of The Road to 1984).
	10:30 a. m.	Discussion of Orwell.
	10:50 a. m.	Break.
	11:00 a. m.	Discussion. Reports?
	Noon	Lunch break.
	1:00 p. m.	Videotape of Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four.
	3:00 p. m.	Break.
	3:15 p. m.	Discussion.
	3:45 p. m.	Assignments and plans for Weekend III.
	4:00 p. m.	Essay.
	5:00 p. m.	End of session.

Weekend III

Friday	6:00 p. m.	Review of questions on Huxley and Orwell.
	6:15 p. m.	Kurt Vonnegut's Player Piano.
	7:00 p. m.	Break.
	7:15 p. m.	Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451.
	8:00 p. m.	Forum on free speech, censorship, etc.
	9:15 p. m.	Wrapup discussion. Assignments.
	10:00 p. m.	End of session.
Saturday	9:00 a. m.	Discussion of literary styles used by authors read for this course and of Frye's essay.
	10:00 a. m.	Guest lecturer.
	10:30 a. m.	Discussion.
	10:45 a. m.	Break.
	11:00 a. m.	Quiz. Part I of final exam.
	Noon	Lunch break.
	1:00 p. m.	Discussion.
	1:30 p. m.	Videotape of Fahrenheit 451.
	3:30 p. m.	Break.
	3:45 p. m.	Final exam essay. Part II of final.
	5:00 p. m.	End of session.